
CHRIST's Temptation in the Wilderness,

A
P R O O F

OF A

DIVINE MISSION.

B. B. O. B.

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CHRIST's Temptation in the Wilderness,

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WITH A

PREVIOUS DISSERTATION

UPON THE

P R O S O P O P E I A;

O R

PERSONALIZING-FIGURE.

By CALEB FLEMING.

—He has destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. And has delivered them, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.

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REASONS

Assigned for this Publication.

WHEN the dissertation on the Pro-sopopeia is attended to, it will be natural for some to ask, "What possible motive could the author have for cont罗roverting the current established opinion of mankind, in the article of an evil Being, the great seducer of human spirits? Was it for the sake of meeting opposition from inveterate prejudice?"

The answer honestly given is this, He does not know, or he is not aware of any other motive, than a conviction of the infinite

infinite importance of truth ; and of the direct tendency which this dissertation has, in his idea, to remove difficulties in reading the holy scriptures ; more particularly, as it throws light upon the history of our Lord's wilderness-temptations.

But it will again be asked, “ Might not the author have been well excused the trouble of publishing that discourse, when An Enquiry into those Temptations, has been already made by the Reverend Mr Hugh Farmer ; published so lately as the year 1761, and which has very deservedly met with great approbation ? ”

In reply to this, Let it be observed, that the general plan of the following discourse on the temptations, was publickly delivered at Pinners-Hall, London, previous to any knowledge of that Inquiry ; and was drawn up

up at the request of a gentleman, who found difficulties on the face of this part of gospel-history. And though in the articles of our Lord's being led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ; and in the varied scenery of temptation being visionary, I had the pleasure of finding in that inquiry an agreement with mine own interpretation ; yet, forasmuch as, in some other things, I may differ from my ingenious friend, and much esteemed brother, this publication, I am perswaded, can, by no means, give him offence. For I will assure him, of having no pretensions to share the laurels ; except in this, I would, with him, be sincerely endeavouring to promote the spread of truth, and the interests of virtue, according to that degree of ability and opportunity which God has given me.

And

And I have this farther to add, that since this discourse on the temptations does professedly aim at shewing, that they are in proof of our Lord's divine mission ; neither his Inquiry, nor any other publication upon the subject, that I know of, in the world, can be able to place it in the invidious light of a competition.



E R R A T A.

- Page 10, Line 5, from bottom, read *to and fro*.
- Page 20, Line 9, for *keen*, read *been*.
- Page 27, Line 1, for *has*, read *have*.
- Page 31, Line 6, from bottom, for *absceſſ*, read *obſeſſ*.
- Page 40, Line 16, for *this*, read *it*.
- Page 59, Line 4, dele *possible*.
- Page 61, Line 15, for *oracles*, read *oracle*.



A

DISSERTATION
UPON THE
PROSOPOEIA.

The Extravagancies of an ideal Tempter vulgarly personalized.

§ I. HE opinion of an invisible evil
being, as the common Seducer
of mankind, has even among us
assumed a claim to *orthodoxy*;—a being, who
is supposed to be “constantly whispering at the
“ear of every man, and, by a kind of omni-
“science, to be acquainted with the most se-
“cret thoughts and intents of the human
“heart; incessantly soliciting its depravity.”
—which idea of an evil invisible spirit, how-
ever familiar to mankind, appears to me, to
be no other than an abuse of a personalizing
figure, common to all languages, and to all ages
of the world. And yet to controvert this opi-

B

nion,

A

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nion, has been treated as a mark of heretical pravity: so that some, ridiculously enough, have imagined it a species of *atheism*! But what wonder, when they have attributed to their busy malignant adversary, a sort of omnipresence and omniscience! when they have even conceived of this being, of their own creating, as every where counter-acting and overturning the plan of divine purposes and proceedings with mankind!

An extravagance which has never been exceeded by the most ignorant Pagan idolaters; though it has been observed, " that the history of the most ancient heathens is wrapped up in such a fabulous dress, that we are but just able to discover the traces and footsteps of truth, even in their theology." — *Strabo*, to this purpose, tells us, that fable and poetry were long in repute before history and philosophy.—And that it was the taste of the ancients to mix fable with every thing. A story in those rude ages was not worth the telling, if it did not strike the imagination with surprise and wonder. Their histories were dressed like *Homer's* account of the siege of *Troy*, blended with fable, to give them the more grateful relish with the people, accustomed to fiction. Poetry and fable not only made up their learning, but their very religion: fables to conceal the doctrines, and poetry to convey the fables (*a*).

From

(*a*) Dr. *Young's* History of Idolatrous Corruptions, Vol. I. page 81.

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From this account of the ancient pagan theology, we cannot think it strange that the idea of temptation from the address of sensitive good, should have been usually expressed under some personalizing figure. Nay, it seems almost impossible that it should not have been thus universally spoken of. And yet, it will not, perhaps, be easily shewn, that they did ascribe omniscience and omnipresence to the evil being, as many of our moderns seem to have done.

But the great and important use of the personalizing figure in all languages, may be further discoverable from the following citation ; for the elegant and ingenious HARRIS, in his *Hermes*, whilst making the distinction between the severe and logical style, and the ornamental and rhetorical, says, " When we speak " of words, naturally devoid of sex, as neuters, " we speak of them *as they are*, and as becomes " a logical enquiry. When we give them a *sex*, " by making them masculine or feminine, they " are from thenceforth personified ; are a kind " of intelligent beings, and become, as such, the " proper ornaments either of rhetoric or of " poetry."

One illustration is given from four lines of MILTON.

" At his command th'uprooted hill's retir'd
" Each to his place ; they heard his voice, and went
" Obsequious : Heav'n his wonted face renew'd
" And with fresh flourets Hill and Valley smil'd."

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Here all things are personified ; the hills bear, and the valleys smile, and the face of heaven is renewed. Suppose, then, that the poet had been necessitated by the laws of his language to have said :—each hill retired to its place—“ Heaven renewed its wonted face.—How profaic, and lifeless would these neuters have “ appeared? How detrimental to the prosopopeia, which he was aiming to establish? “ In this therefore he was happy, that the “ language in which he wrote imposed no “ such necessity ; and he was too wise a writer to impose it upon himself (b).”

Of the Origin of a Devil.

§ 2. A superb genius thus accounts for the origin of a devil: he says, (c) “ That as the most uncivilized part of mankind, have some way or other climbed up into the conception of a God, or supreme power ; so they have seldom forgot to provide their fears with certain ghastly notions, which, instead of better, have served them pretty tolerably for a devil. And this proceeding seems to be natural enough ; for it is with men, whose imaginations are lifted up very high, after the same rate as it is with those whose bodies are so, that as they are delighted with the advantages of a nearer contemplation upwards, so they are equally terrified with

“ the

(b) *Hermes*, p. 58—60. Notes.

(c) *Tale of a Tub*, p. 108. 7th Edition.

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" the dismal prospect of the precipice below.
" Thus in the choice of a *devil*, it has been the
" usual method of mankind to single out some
" being, either in act or in vision, which was
" in most antipathy to the god they had
" formed."—Philosophers have a mysterious
and theological language, distinct from that
of the vulgar, and we must *not* suffer ourselves
to be deceived by their pompous words, as to
make a venerable *mystery* of a mere *allegory* (*d*).

Besides this, a most learned and grave
writer has observed of the poetical licence,
that it has contributed not a little to the
fixing and establishing of popular opinion ;
for, says he, " Though in the matter of his-
" tory, poets usually follow their own humour,
" and stretch out, by the force of imagination,
" a matter which shrinks of itself to a short
" and simple narration ; yet in a matter of
" opinion they commonly follow the humour
" of the times, and take liberty to express
" freely the manners and thoughts of the age
" in which they live (*e*)."

Moreover, a fine writer remarks,—" That
" the high *figurative manner* which fits a lan-
" guage so peculiarly for the use of the poet,
" had not with us in Queen *Elizabeth's* time,
" been yet controuled by the prosaic genius
" of philosophy and logic.—It had its rise
" from religion.—The pagan religion, of all
" others, was the properest to introduce and

B 3

encourage

(*d*) *Platonism* unveiled, Chap. vi.

(*e*) *Spencer* on *Prodigies*, p. 174.

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" encourage a spirit of allegory and moral
" fiction. Hence we easily account for the
" allegoric cast of the old *dramas*, which hold
" very much of the nature of our ancient mo-
" ralities.—Thus *necessity* is brought in as a
" person of the drama in one of *Aeschylus's*
" plays; and *death* in one of *Euripides*: to say
" nothing of many shadowy persons in the
" comedies of *Aristophanes*. The truth is, the
" pagan religion deified every thing, and de-
" livered these deities into the hands of their
" painters, sculptors, and poets. In like man-
" ner Christian superstition, or if you will, mo-
" dern barbarism, impersonated every thing."

Agreeable to this, a learned divine of the church of *England* says,—“ That the ancient
“ poets were a generation audacious and law-
“ less: who shew truth in disguise and mas-
“ querade; and that *Virgil* does grossly philo-
“ sophize (f).” We have nevertheless reason
to conclude, they have had at all times and in
all places, a first influence on the minds of
the vulgar.

To prevent the spreading of superstition among the *Hebrew* people, Dr. *Spencer* was of opinion, “ that many of the critical rites and usages appointed the Jewish nation, will be found to resolve into the divine purpose to cross and thwart, by his command, the rites of the *Labii*, the *Egyptians*, and other neighbouring nations, which had the *devil*, (*i. e.* superstition)

(f) Dr. *T. Burnet's* State of departed Souls, p. 319. *Dennis's* Translation.

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"superstition) for the great master of their
"ceremonies (g)." — So I understand Spencer's
devil; and presume it could be no other: since
he presently tells us, "that the religion of the
world did generally consist of little rites, weak
observances, bodily postures, which the religion
of Christ did oppose, by being plain, simple,
rational, vital, spiritual; it being the main
design of Christianity to employ and per-
fect the mind and spirit of man." — Supersti-
tion must therefore have been the great master
of the ceremonies in the world's religion, which
the Doctor calls, the *devil*. And indeed the
word rendered *devil* and *devils*, in the Old
Testament writings, will shew, that the idea
was derived from idolatry. See *Leviticus xvii.*
7. and *Deuteronomy xxxii. 17.* where the original
terms have been shewn, by learned men, to in-
tend no other than the *goats* which were wor-
shipped (b).

*In what Manner the personalizing Figure describes
Temptation.*

§ 3. Were we not to admit of the figurative
manner, we could have no just idea of the
Old Testament history of temptation: for in
the Mosaic account of the first lapse, many
puzzling questions would otherwise start up,
at the very mention of a *speaking serpent*.

B 4

Whereas,

(g) Dr. Spencer on *Prodigies*, p. 23.

(b) *Young's Idolatries*, Vol. I. p. 15. Bishop Clogher's Ori-
gin of Hieroglyphics, p. 10.

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Whereas, when understood of the appetite, or animal desire, controverting a divine prohibition, the whole is easy and intelligible. And the very sentence on the serpent, to *go on his belly and eat dust*, is a fine allegoric representation of a man's proneness to earth, and having nothing better than *dust* to feed upon, whilst he is governed by his animal desires and inclinations. This proneness of the *serpent*, denoting the reptile groveling state of the passions, might be illustrated from the sentence on the woman, *and thy desire shall be to thine husband, and he shall rule over thee*; i. e. thou shalt always find the conjugal felicity to arise, from observing that law of subordination which nature has established. In like manner, the sentence on the serpent will be found to import the subdual of the appetite; its being kept under the controul of reason: without which man will become sordid, he will feed on dust; his deportment will not rise higher than that of the reptile. Thus the doctrinal instruction of this Eastern allegory appears to my understanding.

In all after-instances of *satanic* temptations, we shall be obliged to recur to the personalizing figure. So in the case mentioned in *Chronicles* xxi. 1. "When *Satan* stood up against " *Israel*, and provoked *David* to number the " people." It cannot, in fair construction, intend any other than the pride and vanity of his own heart; which would gratify itself in

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In a boasting confidence of the vast number of his fighting men ; for, from his own confession, this must have been the real state of the case. See *2 Samuel xxiv. 10.* “ I beseech thee, “ O Lord ! take away the iniquity of thy ser-“ vant, for I have done very foolishly.” — Here is no hint of any charge of guilt lying on any other than himself. And the *adversary* may well be supposed to have been within his own breast ; since an apostle will describe a combat between flesh and spirit in one and the same man, *Gal. v. 17.* and elsewhere.

It would not be impertinent to ask, how it comes about, that the *devil*, or *Satan*, is never mentioned till now in all the Old Testament history from the first lapse, though so many great occasions did intervene ? Why not when *Cain* slew his brother ? — I would answer, Because *Cain* himself was *that wicked One*. Nor do we find, by the history, he had any other prompter than his own passions. — But to quit this excursion, proceed we to the next passage where the word *Satan* is mentioned ; and that is *Psalm cix. 6.* “ Set thou a wicked man over “ him ; and let *Satan* stand at his right hand.” Which the margin reads *an adversary*. The word *Satan* is then in this place *exegetical* ; and the verse will read thus : “ Set thou a wicked “ man over him ; let even *Satan*, *an adversary*, “ stand at his right hand.”

A third passage is found in *Zechariah iii. 1, 2.* “ And he shewed me (*i. e.* in vision) *Joshua* the high

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" high priest standing before the angel of the
" Lord, and *Satan* standing at his right hand
" to resist him." But what can so well ex-
plain this as the book of *Ezra* does? there
we find that *Rehum* the chancellor, and *Shim-
shai* the scribe, who wrote a letter to *Artaxerxes* the king, at *Jerusalem*, may be clearly
understood as the Adversary; for these men
had opposed *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua*, whom the
prophet foresaw in the vision.

I have omitted the book of *Job*; but, in
that book, what can be more evident than that
Satan is only an ideal dramatic person? He
is never once mentioned as attempting to sed-
uce *Job* by any address, or subtle suggestions
to corrupt his mind: he only solicits leave
of *JEHOVAH* to inflict painful diseases upon his
body. And after this, he is never once more
introduced in the drama. Whatever seducing
or Satanic suggestions are mentioned, are those
only of his wife, who would advise him to
destroy himself; or of his friends, who accuse
him of hidden crimes, under his heaviest cala-
mities. And I should conclude, that no other
than the *spirit of censoriousness* must be meant,
chap. ii. 2. where *Satan*, when asked *from whence
he came?* gives this account of himself, *from going
and fro in the earth, and from walking up and
down in it*. What else can be meant by it, I
cannot understand.

And in the New Testament writings, the
personalizing figure for temptation, is used by
our

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our Lord himself, when he calls *Peter, Satan*; because of his endeavour to dissuade him from submitting to those sufferings which were appointed him to undergo; and no other sense can be affixed to the words *Satan* and *devil*, when he applies them to *Judas*, because of his covetousness and treachery.—Indeed it has been observed, that the word *Shaithan*, in Arabic, which answers to the Hebrew *Satan*, ever was in use for an adversary (*i*).—Every man is, in fact, a *Satan* or a *devil* to another, who either endeavours to corrupt his mind, or otherwise to abuse, injure, or oppress him. And we know that *Solomon* did represent all allurements under the stratagems of a strange woman.—On the other hand, as to the terrifying and dismayng address, St. *Peter* does expressly mention the persecutor under the term *devil*, “the *adversary* that went about “like a roaring lion, seeking whom he might “devour,” Epistle v. 8. The persecuting spirit is diabolical, whether in *Nero*, or in *Lewis XIV.* St. *Paul* has also mentioned the powers on earth which did oppose the spread of the gospel, as *spiritual wickednesses in high places!* and, most probably, he intends, the established pagan and Jewish *clergy*; or those men who assumed the character of ministers of religion, whose superstitious rage has been the most malignant and merciless.

The

(*i*) *Ockley's History of the Saracens*, Vol. I. p. 57.

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The personalizing Figure, is found very extensive
in the sacred Writings.

§ 4. As a farther argument in illustration of the personalizing figure, we are able to prove its *extensive* use familiar to the sacred writings. I might have discovered almost numberless instances; but shall rather refer to the poetical and prophetical books. *Job*, *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, and *Ecclesiastes*, do abound with this figure; and none need be told, that *wisdom* and *folly* have a personal appearance and address given them. Nay, even the wisdom and power of God, in their various manifestations, are spoken of under the personalizing figure, both in the Old and in the New Testament. So that *word* of the *Lord*, by which the heavens were made, is said to have come to the prophets, which very *word* did tabernacle with the man Christ Jesus, “When men beheld his glory, as that ‘of the only begotten Son of God.’” The only Son of the promise, that had been prophesied of from the beginning.—So the instructive *word* of Jesus is personalized; and is the same with the witnessing Spirit. Compare *John* xiii. 48. with *Romans* viii. 16. And, in like manner, the creative power of God, is also called *the Holy Ghost*, because of that supernatural formation of the *Messiah*, mentioned *Luke* i. 35. And when the communications of knowledge, wisdom, and power, are to be

so plentifully made to apostles, in evidence of our Lord's exaltation to sovereignty, they are foretold by him under the name of *Comforter*, John xvi. 7. which gifts are also imaged by *rivers of living water*, that flow from the disciples, John vii. 38, 39. This very personalizing figure, applied to the *charismata*, men fond of mystery have affected to realize. Hence the astonishing opinion, *of more persons than one in the godhead*, has arisen! an opinion, which verily has given so much advantage to the *Mahometan*, that in the letters written by the *Caliphs* to the Christian emperors at Constantinople, and on other occasions, their style has been, *The servants of the one God who has no partner*.—And they call Christians *idolaters and enemies of God* (k).—Again, to what has the infidelity of the Jew been more owing, than to the Christians making a god of *the seed of Abraham*, and *the son of David*? They were always taught to expect that the Messiah should be a man. The applying to Jesus Christ an *eternal generation*, and a divine essence, has most efficaciously obstructed the credit of the Jew to the popular Christian system.

We might then reasonably ask, who could possibly mistake the personalizing figure when applied to the Spirit of God, that should be *poured out upon all flesh*? the divine source of those supernatural abilities so diversified in St. Paul's writings? It is not easy to suppose a distinct

(k) Consult Ockley's History of the Saracens, Vol. I. p. 34. 37. 38, 78, 116, et alibi.

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stinct personality, when this apostle assures us,
“ *that though there are diversities of operations,*
“ *yet it is the same God which worketh all in all.*”
I Cor. xii. 6.

But besides the figure applied to extraordinary communications from the deity, the apostles make use of the same form of speech, when they would speak of the operations of the human faculties and powers.—So it is, that we find *faith*, *charity*, *sin*, *death*, and *hell*, have personal properties and operations ascribed to them.—*For example*, *faith* is said to be an agent, *Galatians v. 6.* *Ephesians vi. 6.* In one place, it works by love: in the other, it handles the shield.—Once it is said to be shipwrecked, *1 Timothy i. 19.* And at another time, it is represented as overcoming all difficulties. See *Hebrews xi.*—In like manner *charity* has a varied personal description, full of energy. See *1 Corinthians xiii.* And not only *faith* and *charity*, but *sin* is put under the personalizing figure, *Romans* sixth and seventh chapters. Nay, it has weapons that are mortal in their impressions. We farther observe the same figure used for *death*; it has a sting, and it has also a victory, or dominion. Compare *1 Corinthians xv.* with *2 Timothy i. 10.* And moreover, *death* and *hell* are said conjointly to make a surrender of their prisoners, *Apocalypse xx. 13.*

Here we might call in evidence the usages of the princes of poets, viz. *Homer* among the ancients, and *Milton* among the the moderns. They personify *death*, as a fine pen remarks,

—“ It

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—“ It is well known that *sleep* and *death* are
“ made brothers by *Homer*. It was to this
“ old *Gorgias* elegantly alluded, when at the
“ extremity of a long life he lay slumbering on
“ his death-bed. A friend asked him, *how he*
“ *did*? Sleep (replied the old man) is just de-
“ livering me over to the care of his bro-
“ ther (*l*).”—Farther, this writer pronounces of
Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*, “ that he did
“ well not only to adopt *death* as a person,
“ but consider him as masculine: in which
“ he was so far from introducing a phantom
“ of his own, or from giving it a gender not
“ supported by custom, that perhaps he has as
“ much the sanction of national opinion for
“ his masculine death, as the ancient poets
“ had for any of their deities (*m*).”

After all, there are two or three passages in the New Testament, where the terms *Satan* and *devil*, may be thought to import a malignant evil being, or spirit; and which do not seem so well to bear the *Prosopeia*. One is *Matth. xxv. 41*. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* N. B. We are under no necessity of saying, that there are no apostate spirits of any other order of beings but man. This, we would not be understood to affirm, or even to insinuate; most probably there are. But by no means can we suppose it probable that such beings are allowed

(*l*) *Harris's Hermes*, p. 52.

(*m*) *Ibid.* p. 51. Note.

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allowed to sport and gratify themselves, in promoting the defection and delinquency of other orders of intelligence. And it might as well be imagined, that some superior beings to those apostate spirits, did urge and occasion their apostacy, and so on *ad infinitum*, as that we should once suppose these superior beings allowed to urge and occasion man's apostacy. But even here St. Jude will aid us in these speculations; for he says, *That the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day*, verse 6. Assuredly then, we are not under any the least danger of any embarrass, or delusion from these miscreants, thus chained under darkness.

Another passage is, *Heb. ii. 14.* where *he that bath the power of death*, is said to be *the devil*. I am not ashamed nor afraid to say, that I understand this of an accusing guilty conscience. I know not of any thing else, that has the power of death (n) : for St. Paul has assured me, *that the sting of death is sin ; and that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. And although God is said to be a consuming fire, he can only be so to the impenitent sinner, *for God is love*, *1 John iv. 8, 16.* —A farther instance is all I recollect, and that is in *Luke x. 18. I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven*. Here I should understand by *Satan*, that adversary which lay against the truth in the national prejudices,

(n) Consult *1 John iii. 19, 21.* and other parallel texts.

prejudices which gave way, with great celerity, upon the seventy executing their commission ; and that our Lord foresaw would do so much more extensively, upon the publication of his gospel to the gentile world. Compare verse 19. *Behold I give, or will give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, &c.*

The Consequences of dropping the Figure, fatal.

§ 5. When we attentively consider the infinite injury that would be done to mankind, by changing the *Prosopeia* into real character, we shall see abundant reason to retain it : for verily not to do it, would open a deplorable scenery of evil upon us.—The effects which have been ascribed to the devil, are beyond measure astonishing ! they are such as would confound all our ideas of God's moral government and providence ; and would either lead us, with the sceptic and infidel, to deny any divine interposition at all ; or else, with the idolatrous Easterns, to pay homage to an imaginary *devil*, in order to keep him in the better temper towards us.—The idea of *demonism* had actually enslaved the whole world, and the power of the priests became enormous, under the spread of this conception. For, verily, from this resource, the *Pagan*, *Jewish*, and *Christian magicians* have been so plentifully supplied, with the horrid ability of practising

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their incantations and sorceries with so much success. Which we thus account *for*, as all imposture implies the putting on a semblance of reality; so it was that idolatry did ascribe perfections which do really belong to the one God, to other beings who have not those perfections. In like manner, as the *Deity* had, in all the earlier ages of the world, made known his will to mankind, and did execute many of his purposes by the ministrations of his good angels, *who are mighty in strength, who do his commands, and hearken to the voice of his word;* hence the depraved imaginations of mankind have invented evil angels, and spirits, employed in a thousand silly services; and by apparitions and uncommon impressions disturbing the quiet of persons, haunting their houses, and impertinently intruding into their most hidden retreats. Stories of such apparitions, have had their support, upon the credit given to an hierarchy of evil spirits, or of invisible beings. And young minds have been early terrified with the mischievous opinion, so that their prejudices have not been removed by any argument or reasoning, from the most able and venerable opposers of superstition.

Necromancy, “the art, or the act of communicating with devils, and by that means of calling up the dead, and conversing with them, by putting questions, and receiving answers;” owes all its extravagance to this very source. And so far has the enchantment been

been efficacious, as to gain credit from men of exemplary piety and great learning, in some later ages of the world. At least, they have been persuaded of the truth of those fanciful reports, of the dead appearing either to their friends, or to strangers, and revealing to them some very hidden things.—So very early was this depravity of the human mind as the time of SAUL, who consulted the *witch* of *Endor*, in order to receive instruction from *Samuel*; and by which sorcery he was so infatuated, as to fancy he saw the prophet come from the dead.

But how amazing is it, that *witchcraft* and *necromancy* should have obtained any credit, where the gospel-revelation had once spread its informing rays! which has assured us, that there is, there can be no communication open between the living and the dead. See *Matt. xvi. 26*, —*end*. None can be admitted to come from the dead; no, not on that most important errand, of *persuading the wicked to reform*. But the better to account for the arts of *magic* and *sorcery* being retained in the professing Christian world, besides the amazing force of imagination, which few have justly calculated; it shall be shewn, that the same pagan policy still operates; which will appear by a citation which I shall make from a lively popish pen, well disposed to rally the craft of the priest.—The paragraph will be found to cut deep into the metaphysical *abscess*, and to lay open the bloat-

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ed fiction.—“ Among the number of things
“ alledged against LUTHER, it was said by se-
“ veral, by way of irony, that he, who had
“ taken the devil’s advice in overthrowing *mass*,
“ shewed his gratitude to him, by abolishing
“ the practice of exorcising, and aimed at level-
“ ing all the bulwarks which had been raised
“ to keep out the enemy of mankind. It has
“ keen remarked since, that in all those coun-
“ tries where *exorcism* has been laid aside, they
“ have no longer heard of witchcrafts, or of
“ persons possessed by the devil ; and it has been
“ said both in word and writing, that the devils
“ knew little of their own interest, in taking
“ refuge among the catholics, who alone have
“ the power of commanding them. It has also
“ been observed, that there is a prodigious
“ number of magicians, and possessed people,
“ in the Romish communion, to this day.—
“ However, this is too serious a subject to divert
“ one’s self withal ; for it was certainly a very
“ melancholy affair, that proved the ruin of
“ so many families, and the punishment of a
“ number of unfortunate wretches ; as it is a
“ great happiness to mankind, that *the courts*
“ *of justice* in the more enlightened countries
“ no longer give ear to idle stories of fascina-
“ tion and magic. Those of the reformed re-
“ ligion removed this stumbling-block above
“ two hundred years before the catholics, for
“ which they were accused of striking at the
“ foundation of the Christian religion ; and

it

A DISSERTATION upon the Protopoœia. 21

" it was objected to them, that possessions by
" demons and witchcrafts, are generally ad-
" mitted by the holy scriptures (o)."

Perhaps there was no degree of strength in the objection ; for the sacred scriptures do not appear, upon careful examination, to teach any such doctrine of demonism, as the Reverend Dr. *Lardner* has shewn, with great energy of reason and argument. His piece has hitherto had no confutation ; and it does not seem that it ever will (p).

There is yet behind a much more formidable objection to our dropping the personalizing figure ; and that is, the shocking influence which it has upon the morals of mankind, wherever they are supposing a malignant evil being, that is incessantly seducing and betraying them into sin. The very idea of a devil having been too subtile and cunning for us, is a plausible subterfuge for the sinner. He thus makes an apology for himself, *I should not have committed the foul crime, if the devil had not been in me ; or, an overmatch for me.*—But in truth and fact, it is no other than of the nature of delusion for the sinner to say, *the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* In a more just and rational conception of ourselves, we can impeach no being whatsoever of the guilt of our own inattentions, inconsiderations, and irresolutions. For whenever we are tempted so as to commit sin, we

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are

(o) Voltaire's Works, English Edition, 12mo, Vol. IV. p. 63,
64.

(p) See his *Cafe of Demoniacs.* Compare *Platonism unveiled,*
P. I. Chapter VI.

22 A DISSERTATION upon the *Protopopeia.*

are then drawn away of our own lusts, and enticed. The serpent that seduced, was verily *within us*, however the object of the appetite or passion was *without us*. That beguiling serpent was no other than the lusting of the passion, or the false playings of imagination.

Any one may plainly perceive, that the idea of a being much *superior* to us in knowledge, sagacity, and penetration, and also invisible, must greatly have the advantage of us ; which cannot be any way consistent with these adorable apprehensions of God, that are inculcated by all the teachings of nature, reason, and revelation. Nor could we know, in any circumstance of crime or folly, how to fix the guilt upon ourselves, so as to urge the repentance with efficacy ; for it will yet remain doubtful with us, whether we shall not be as easy a prey to the next stratagem, played off upon us by the grand deceiver. In a word, the vulgar idea of a *devil*, as a kind of omnipresent being, ever upon the watch, and with abilities superior to our own, and who has an open easy access to the imagination, is what manifestly placeth man upon an *unequal* foot of trial ; and, in spite of all his endeavours, there will be some abatements made to the aggravations of crime, in any relenting sinner.

To ascribe the wickedness of men, to the agency or influence of an invisible evil being, is evidently in some measure, to alleviate the guilt, and soften the demerit of the criminal. When therefore,

therefore, in any court of judicature, we hear the prisoner arraigned, as not having the fear of God before his eyes, and being moved by the instigation of the devil to cast off that fear, it is impossible we should do other than consider it, as, in some degree, extenuating the guilt; and forbidding the rigour of the sentence of condemnation.—And especially, where the culprit has been educated in a deplorable ignorance of his duty, both towards God and man.

On the contrary, when the temptation is conceived of under the figurative idea of *Satan* or the *devil*, which will literally intend an accusing guilty conscience, we shall be able to discern, with precision, the object of a virtuous care and watchfulness; and shall discover it to be within our own power to guard against the malignant impression. We are only to see to it, that the appetite, passion, and imagination be regular, and reasonable in all their operations. It thence follows, by a fair deduction, that in the moral system, the consequences of dropping the figure would be fatal. And this might be demonstrated by innumerable facts from history, where men have adopted the notion of two unoriginated evil principles, the one good, the other evil, and have divided between them the government of the world: or rather, have made them two hostile warring powers, in eternal enmity towards each other.

Popular prejudice has, every where, been industriously cultivated.

§ 6. However the fiction may have been exposed, or the superstitious system ridiculed, there has been unwearyed immense pains taken to preserve the prejudice, and to spread the thick cloud of ignorance over the understanding of the vulgar. The scheme of depraving the minds of men, has been shockingly ancient and universal. The most celebrated *pagan* philosophers have said all they could in defence of the priestly and political depraving measure. Witness even a *Cicero*, of whose opinion concerning the *religion of his country*, it is thus affirmed, by a very capable pen:—“ He could “ not possibly harbour a thought of the truth “ or divinity of so absurd a worship: and the “ liberty which not only he, but all the *old* “ writers take, in ridiculing the character of “ their gods, and the fictions of their infernal “ torments, shews, that there was not a man “ of liberal education who did not consider it “ as an engine of state, or political system, contrived for the uses of government, and to keep “ the people in order: in this light *Cicero* always commends it as a wise institution, singularly adapted to the genius of *Rome*, and constantly inculcates an adherence to its “ rites, as the duty of all good citizens.” “ *Polybius* also thought the superstitions a “ wise contrivance for the giddy multitude, “ who

" who are agitated by illicit desires, wild
" resentments, and violent passions; so that
" he thought no way was left of restraining
" them, but by the help of secret terrors, and
" tragical fictions.—Though such a scheme
" would not be necessary, if a society could be
" formed of wise men only (q)."

But we are not to wonder at such defence
of superstition; " since religious founders have
" ever adapted their doctrine to the notions
" already received in their respective coun-
" tries. *Zoroaster*, in an happy climate, direct-
" ed his chief adoration to the sun, and to fire,
" his image upon earth.—The *Egyptians*, fed
" by the *Nile*, to moisture and the power of
" vegetation.—*Zamobris*, under a frozen sky,
" connected his rites with the joys of wine,
" and promised to his *Scythians*, like a Saxon
" *Odin*, an eternal revel with himself in a noble
" hall, as a reward of their piety and virtue.
" —So *Numa* adopted the *Sabine* and *Tus-
can* gods, the ancient deities of *Italy*, and
" only added some *new* divinities, and such a
" form of worship as the exigencies of his new
" founded city seemed to require (r)."

" Even a *Plato*, (called divine) fearing the
" fate of *Socrates*, veiled the greatest truths
" under a cloud of *fictions* and *enigmas*, which
" proved a snare to his disciples: and not
" having courage enough to oppose common
" error, made of three properties of the creator
" so

(q) Dr. Middleton's Life of *M. T. Cicero*, Vol. III. p. 345.

(r) *Blackwell's Court of Augustus*, p. 30.

“ (s) so many gods, or divine persons ; com-
 “ plying with the theology of that age, wherein
 “ powers, passions, properties, &c. fortune,
 “ fate, justice, love, virtue, honour, safety,
 “ concord, &c. were not otherwise conceived
 “ of than under the idea of so many deities ;
 “ so much was the plurality of gods the philo-
 “ sophy *a-la-mode*, even among the wisest.”

“ It is difficult,” said *Plato*, “ to find the
 “ father of this universe ; and when you have
 “ found him, it is not permitted to speak of
 “ him to the people.” So *Clemens Alexandrinus*
 has observed.

And *Minutius Felix* made the same observation after *Clemens*.—“ *Plato*, says he, spake more
 “ clearly of God than any other philosopher,
 “ and his doctrine would be perfectly divine,
 “ if he had not spoiled it by a mixture of the
 “ religion established by the laws of his country.
 “ For, according to *Plato* in *Timæus*, God is
 “ father of the world, even by his being God.
 “ He is creator of the soul, and of all things,
 “ as well celestial as terrestrial : but that philo-
 “ sopher does previously advertise, that it is
 “ difficult to find him, because of his infinite
 “ power ; and that when he is found, it is im-
 “ possible to explain one’s self concerning him
 “ to the common people.”—“ Why impossible?
 “ Because dangerous (t).”

Civil tyranny, the pride of power in princes,
 and governors, who have had no reverence of
 the

(s) Viz. *Wisdom, Power, and Goodness*.

(t) See *Platonism unveiled*, P. I. Chap. VII.

the majesty of the people, has always had the homage of the mind within their claims, as we are informed from those very ancient books of *Esther* and *Daniel*. Lessons of better policy might have been learned from those invaluable monuments by all princes ; and have convinced them, " that the rights of conscience, are much too sacred for the sway of any civil sceptre."

The vulgar prejudices, the delusions of the people, have not only been industriously propagated in ancient times; but a *divine* of the English establishment, speaking of modern times, has a remarkable observation ; for having quoted Lord *Shaftsbury*, as saying, " It is not " principle but taste which governs mankind ;" —has to this purpose expressly said, that " In " most countries religion deserves no other " name, than that of absurdity made sacred (u)."

Should we critically examine into the most plausible arguments ever made use of in defence of those measures which propagate and support *superstition*, we shall find them to have every where closely copied the *pagan* policy. The methods at all times taken to confirm the absurd opinion and to countenance the glaring fiction, have been extremely similar ; and this, to the open insult, and inexpressible injury of a plain, simple, rational, and divine system ! But, it must be owned, at the same time, the device has been greatly to the emolument of priestly power, and of a civil tyranny exercised over the people.

Much

(u) Dr. *Brown*, in his *Essay upon Ridicule*.

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Much to our purpose also is that remark made by Dr. T. Burnet.—“ Popery, says he, descends too much to the capacities of the people, not only accommodating itself to their ignorance, but to their superstitious affections. Whereas we ought rather to exalt human nature as high as possible, and so to bring the people to truth, and to a sound understanding(x).” And again, he says, “ Pious frauds prejudice discerning men about religion (y).”

The same observations hold equally good against all Protestants, who propagate or encourage absurd opinions and superstitious observances. They are not a whit less affected by the argument than the papist can be; since such measures sadly deprave the minds of the vulgar, indulge their ignorance, countenance their folly, and hinder the spread of truth in the world. Strange it is, men should take it into their heads, that they *are wiser than God!* and can improve greatly upon the rules he has given, to guide and govern the faith, model the worship and spirit, or attemper the manners of mankind! But when *the Sons of Demetrius* are able thus to harangue one another, —“ *Sirs, you know that by this craft we have our wealth;*” it may be confidently expected, that no reasoning, nor evidence, however conclusive, can avail to produce a reformation in the church system.

CHRIST’s

(x) *State of departed Souls*, p. 172.

(y) *Ibidem.*



CHRIST's Temptation in the Wilderness, a Proof of a divine Mission.

AMONG the many wonderful narratives given by Evangelists, in their history of the life of Christ, that which respects his temptation in the wilderness, is, perhaps, one of the most useful, important, universally instructive, and interesting: since it contains those first principles which inform the understanding, and give the passions of the human heart all their ability, or power of resistance.

The theme chosen to be discoursed upon, is in Matth. iv. 1.—*Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.*

The varied scenery of trial, into which this Text does usher us, is, what gave to the man Christ Jesus that finished idea of human probation, which qualified him for his public ministry. Both St. Mark and Luke do mention the fact; but St. Mark enters not into the scenical address with any precision: he only says, *Jesus was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan: and was with the wild beasts, and that angels ministered to him.* They all agree in placing the event immediately after our Lord's receiving the spirit at his baptism. And here an emphasis should be laid; for the Hebrew gospel, read by the Nazarenes, has it, *the whole fountain of the Holy Ghost descended, and rested upon him (z),* which

(z) Jones's Canon, Vol. I. p. 345.

which very appositely accords with the language of ancient prophecy, *viz.* that of *pouring out* the Spirit. *Prov.* i. 23. *Isa.* xliv. 3. *Joel* ii. 28, 29. *Zech.* xii. 10. *Mal.* iii. 10.

It also agrees with the *Harbinger's* testimony, *that God did not give him the spirit by measure*, John iii. 34. Indeed St. Luke expressly says, *that as Jesus had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him*, Luke iii. 21, 22. Whatever might be the visible symbol, the communication was such as did divinely impress his mind; insomuch that he found himself urged to retire into the wilderness. Now it would be very unnatural to suppose this urgency any other than a divine impulse: it certainly must have been the result of that plentiful *pouring out* of the spirit upon him; for, the additional powers now given him, are found to be much superior to any of his former abilities.

The text farther says, that the end of his being thus led by the spirit into the wilderness, *was, that he might be tempted of the devil*; i. e. he is, in this desart retirement, to explore the whole nature, extent, and energy of the alluring temptation. In those picturesque scenes, he would discern, from the form and manner of address, what kind and degree of influence the most specious sensitive good has on the appetite, passion, and imagination of man. And in order to a balance against the fruitful resources of the enchanting lures, he has the most ample display

display of light and truth that can possibly be in aid of an human mind, in the most urgent and perilous trial (*a*). Divine wisdom saw it meet, that he, who was to deliver mankind from the evil of this present world, should be made familiarly acquainted with the most insinuating address of the sensitive good; in order to qualify him for giving the best possible cautionary instructions in the methods of resistance; even by an exhibition of those principles and maxims which effectually guard the soul from the malignity of evil.

N. B. The spirit, or divine communication of ability, did not urge him to go into the wilderness, in order to *incline* him to comply with temptation. In this sense, *God tempteth no man*; but the design was, to give him the opportunity of approving his piety and devotion, by a diversified scenery of allurement from the sensitive good.

To proceed, the personalizing of the temptation, by calling it *the devil*, methinks should not be looked upon as any thing strange, new, or uncommon; for vulgar conception and opinion had long before this ascribed to evil spirits a power both to abscess the minds and possess the bodies of men. *Plutarch* tells us, “ That the “ method of cure was by the repetition of the “ Ephesian names, which were only a few bar-“ barous unmeaning words : such as *aski*, *ka-*“ *taski*, *aix*, *tetrax*, &c. and these devils, which they

(*a*) Consult *Letter writ, &c.* 1730. Section 3d, of the first Postscript.

" they cast out, had different names, according
 " to the different symptoms of the persons sup-
 " posed to be possessed. So that if the pos-
 " sessed made a noise like an horse, the devil
 " in him was *Neptune*; if they imitated a goat,
 " it was the *mother of the gods*; if they kicked
 " and foamed, it was *Mars*; if they spoke
 " feebly, it was *Apollo Nomius* (b)." Assuredly,
 demonism had a wide spread, and prevailed all
 over the East; and allegory, from the very
 first, had been familiar to the Jewish people (c).
 This appears from their venerable historian,
Moses, who in the beginning of his history,
 has described lust under the hieroglyphic of a
 serpent, *Gen.* iii. 14. And not only *Moses*, but
 the prophets, have dealt much in allegory. They
 were wont to accommodate themselves, in their
 teachings, to the idioms of universal language.
 The same thing may be likewise affirmed of
 the teachings of our Lord and of his apostles.—
 Thus much may suffice for the personalizing of
 temptation (d).

Before we proceed to examine into the sce-
 nery, we should shew some reasons why our
 Lord was to remain in the wilderness *forty*
days without food.

And may we not consider it as perfectly
 agreeable to the majesty of the divine presence,
 that when and whilst the plan of God's purposes
 of grace and mercy was delivering and con-
 templating, he should sustain and support the
 animal

(b) See *Weston's Heathen Rejection of Miracles considered*,
 p. 233.

(c) See Dr. Lardner's

(d) The

iritation,

animal system of that his minister, who, as a favour, was to proclaim the divine scheme to the world? The case of our Lord's fasting, would essentially differ from all preternatural instances of *extacies* and *catalepsies*; as, in the former case, the mind has some sort of visionary scenes, originated from a disordered imagination: and as in the latter case, there does not appear to have been, during the impression, any train of mental perceptions; none that are recoverable by the disordered person. Some instances of these diseased have been very remarkable for their having taken no food of a long season. But they essentially differ from the case before us, where the faculties of the mind were engaged in an incessant, regular, and divinely beneficial attention.

Again, the forty days fasting, as it must be miraculous, so it would give to our Lord a demonstration of the principles of being and life, as they are absolutely independent on this material system.

And again, it must be an accomplishment of prophecy, as it would prove him to have a resemblance to *Moses*, who had foretold, that God would raise up to his people *a prophet like to himself*; who, we are told, did neither eat nor drink for forty days, when he received the law at *Sinai*.

We may now take a distinct, orderly, or methodical view of the successive sceneries of temptation: and they have long appeared to

me as altogether visionary: Like to many of which we read, that did concern *Isaiab*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, and others of the prophets. I shall only mention one or two of *Ezekiel's* visions: chap. iii. 14. *So the spirit lift me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness.* Chap. viii. 3. *And the spirit lift me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem.* Chap. xi. 1. *The spirit lift me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house.*

Very learned and judicious commentators are wont to understand all these scenes as visionary; and not as local, real removals of the prophet. In one text it is expressly said, that the prophet was carried, *in the visions of God*, to *Jerusalem*. In like manner, from the face of gospel-history, it does not appear, that the man Christ Jesus ever changed his wilderness retreat, during the temptations: for, at the instant they are said to finish, he is found in the wilderness, by angels, who come to minister unto him.

Upon the whole, *the temptations of the devil*, are figuratively so called; and in the narrative before us, could import no more than that variety of exciting objects, which are perceived through the medium of sense, else are painted upon the fancy or imagination. But then, they are what have, in their very nature, a repugnancy to truth and reason. Those allurements which address our Lord in the desert, will

will be found to have the following arrangement.

At the end of forty days Jesus is an hungred,
verse 2.

Thence the temptation has this soothing language to the keen appetite :—*If thou be a son of God, create thyself bread.*—If thou be a son of God ; this did not, could not intimate his being any other than a man, forasmuch as the humanity plainly appears by the answer, *Man lives not by bread alone.* The same idea is preserved throughout the several refutations. So ver. 7. *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*—Ver. 10. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.*—Even a VOLTAIRE could observe, that *son of God* signified no more with the Hebrews, than a good and virtuous man ; as *son of Belial*, or of *Satan*, signified a wicked man (e). And here one might observe, that the terms, *only begotten son of God*, and the *first begotten from the dead*, are peculiar to the man Christ Jesus, as he was the *only son of prophecy and promise, in whom all nations should be blessed!* And as God raised him up from the dead to *an universal dominion*. For to no other being has the father ever thus said, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.*—The *first-begotten*, i. e. the chief of those raised from the dead. The temptation says, *If thou be the son of God, thou hast then an ability of creating thyself bread.* Nor is there any reason can be given why so great a favourite of heaven should want bread. It surely

D 200
(e) Voltaire's Works, 12mo, Vol. IV, p. 102. English Edition.

must be consistent with the voice of reason and nature, that thou shouldest, not only now, but on any future occasion, employ those powers which heaven has conferred upon thee, for the purpose of supplying thine own natural wants, or animal cravings.—Thus plausible and urgent is the temptation.

How is it repulsed and overcome? From this kind of reasoning: *q. d.* “The extraordinary divine power communicated to me, I do plainly perceive, is not intended to be so exercised: it is only to be exerted and applied in evidence of my heavenly mission, before proper witnesses and on proper occasions. I shall always therefore conform myself to the will of God, in making use thereof: for he has shewn me, *that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God does man live.*”

The temptation thus appears to have had to do with that first natural principle in man, *viz.* a love of life; and is here put in its fullest vigour and strength, by the immediate excitement, as we may well conclude, from the health of our Lord’s bodily constitution, its perfect freedom from distemper and excess, added to the supernatural power vouchsafed him. We likewise, in his after-history, discover the pious principle to be very active and illustrious in him, whilst he is under a reverse scenery of trial, even when he can say of the bitter cup presented to him, *not my will, but thine be done.* Though at the same time he
second dilgad 101. q. vi. nov. 1671. ad. 11. v. 1. c. 1. l. 1.
well

well knew, that no man had power to take away his life, but by his own consent.—This fundamental principle of piety and devotion, preserved in its vigour, will indeed secure in any other mind whatsoever, all the decencies and decorums of humanity, during the painful or perilous impression of any kind of physical evil.

Nevertheless, it must be owned, that the animal cravings of hunger and thirst, in an healthy body, are ordinarily very active and intense: the energies, when heightened, are extremely urgent and impetuous. This is nature.—But where the *stimulus* is gone, else become weak and languid, there is an indication of disorder and distemperature in the animal frame. As, *on the other hand*, when the healthy appetite returns regularly with the seasons of taking refreshment, the high relish given to our food is deemed one of our most sensible fruitions. Moreover, the being seasonably furnished with the means of commodiously gratifying the healthy appetite, we at all times reckon matter of thankfulness and praise! yea, of supreme delight in the munificent fatherly hand, *which satisfieth the desires of every living thing!*

All this while, we are obliged to own, that the animal life is not, in a moral sense, the first principle either of man's existence or his fruition; for the moral, spiritual, vital principle in him, is of a quite different nature, and in-

38 *Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness,*

tends the eager, intense desire after rectitude.

—It verily imports, an habitual solicitude of standing upon good terms with God and ourselves. The intellectual food, the heavenly *manna*, which feeds this divine principle, is incessantly and universally given; and may be as constantly and universally gathered, by such who hunger and thirst after righteousness.—

What a learned and excellent writer therefore said of the other state of the good man, may as well be applied to this:—“The eternal truth, “the intellectual light, is diffused throughout “the universe, but is received only according “to the measure of the receiver: and souls, “according to the largeness of their knowledge, “and the purity of their affections, become “more capacious of the deity, and take lar-“ger draughts of celestial rays and celestial “inspirations (f).”

This gives the condition of all the truly pious, with the just stating of his faculties, powers, and passions; and it is the healthy spiritual principle, which is durable, immutable, and immortal. A most significant sense of that divine aphorism, *Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God does man live.*

Thus have we acquired an idea of the first temptation; and also of the way in which our Lord did resist and overcome the allurement.

II. The next scenery which opens upon us, should seem yet farther to try his humility and devotion,

(f) Dr. T. Burnet's State of departed Souls, p. 325.

devotion, who so lately has been invested with a most amazing energy of divine power, *i. e.* it would prove whether he will avoid all ostentatious vanity, during the exercise thereof. The visionary scene which the text presents us with, is that of the *temple*, himself placed on a wing of the wonderful fabric, taking a survey of the holy city :—“ It is very probable,” says *L'Enfant*, “ that his situation, or the wing on which he stood, was the *king's gallery*, which, according to *Josephus*, was of such a prodigious height, that no one could look down from the top of it, without making himself giddy.” *Antiq. B. XV. Chap. 14.* (g) The same historian also tells us, that the altitude of the temple was 120 cubits.

Some writers have strangely supposed our Lord was locally removed from the wilderness to the *Temple*, at the time of its being crowded with people. But, besides the great improbability of this being the time of any public festival, there seems undoubted evidence of the scene being only visionary; a piece of city-perspective was presented before him, when, and whilst he was alone in the desert. — Nevertheless, I am humbly of opinion, that this city-perspective was much heightened with a surrounding crowd about the temple, as at a passover. And my reasons are these, were it only to have tried the ability he had of confiding in divine providence, without any other excitement in the trial, any precipice in the

40 *Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness,*

wilderness might as well have served such an intention ; but, inasmuch as the *Temple* is chosen, there must have been some obvious reasons for such representation ; and it is natural for us to suppose, such surrounding circumstance would be the most expressive and striking. This idea seems natural, when it is considered, that these several visionary scenes, were manifestly intended, proleptically, to instruct our Lord in the whole plan of operation, and application of that divine spirit, or power, which was communicated to him at his baptism ; and also to point out to him, what sort or kind of exertions were to be avoided.

But with what great propriety is this representation made, when we consider this, as the national *rendezvous* of the people, where he was to divulge his heavenly message and mission ; and where his historians do report of him, that he did, in a most astonishing manner, once and again, shew his *authority* at their high festivals ! Hence, I should conclude, that it is but natural to conceive of this scenery, so circumstanced, as full of instruction.

Some indeed have so far indulged to their imaginations, as to suppose, by the opening of the Temple-scene, " That a real *devil* was wanting to have a solution of his doubts ; which solution he would have had, if, in making the experiment, *Jesus* had dashed himself in pieces (g) ; " i. e. by casting himself down from the battlements, in compliance with the temptation.

[g] See Dr. Macknight's Harmony, p. 27. 1st Edit.

temptation. But what wonder at this absurdity, when the same writer does not scruple to tell us, "That all the time Jesus was in the wilderness, the CHIEF of the evil spirits, as being best qualified for the undertaking, beset him with a multitude of temptations, in order, if possible, to discover who he was (b)."

By the view taken of the subject, I am constrained to say, that not any thing could appear more groundless and fanciful than that of imagining a chief devil so employed.—And how such an hypothesis can ever conciliate the credit of mankind to the gospel-history, is not of very easy conception.

The design of the temptation undoubtedly was, "That of our Lord's shewing a confidence in the divine care, by an open disregard to the laws of nature, or that of central gravitation,—if thou be the son of God, cast thyself down." It is an observation I was favoured with, from a learned and venerable friend, "That Dr. S. CLARKE has mistaken the sense of the temptation, in his paraphrase on Luke iv. 9. where he makes it say,—If you be the son of God, give an evident proof of YOUR POWER, and throw yourself down from this high place: which cannot be the meaning; since our Lord's safety is put as solely depending upon the protection of divine providence."

"Whereas, the temptation would rather say, if you be the son of God, give an evident proof of your absolute dependence on divine

(b) See Dr. Macknight's Harmony, p. 35, 36. Note,

" divine providence and care, by throwing
" yourself down from this high place."

The visionary temptation seems to suggest what sort of excitement our Lord should have, in the course of his ministry, to render himself popular, and to raise an universal admiration of him.—It speaks this very language ;
" Should you take such a measure, at the time
" of the public festivals, you may do it with
" the utmost safety and success ; you need not
" doubt of the aid of the invisible ministring
" spirits, who will preserve you from all
" possible harm ; forasmuch as a promise is
" made of such divine protection, and none
" surely have so much reason of reliance, as
" the *Messias*." Verses 3d and 4th.

I have thus understood the temptation, as reflecting light and instruction on the after-conduct of our Lord ; or, as prophetically shewing him what would be the strongest excitements to the exertion of that power, which was to attest the divinity of his mission, in the course of his public ministrations. And verily, this seems, to me, to give the design of every of the visionary scenes. *For example* ; the former would shew the impropriety of his miraculously creating bread for his own private gratification, or amusement ; though he should once and again perform similar acts of power, in multiplying or magnifying bread. So he did, when he fed thousands with a few loaves.—And as to the second visionary scene, though

he

he must not perform feats of flying through the air, to surprize and entertain the multitudes ; yet he may walk on the sea in the night, when it shall be proper so to confirm the faith of his disciples.—However, such exertions of power, such acts of sovereignty over the elements, *bushing the storm by a word*, were not proper for more public exhibitions.—And if we farther cast our eyes on the *next* scenery, we shall find it extremely proper to guard his mind against a desire of swaying a civil sceptre, however the people should be desirous of making him their king.

We may now proceed to a more distinct examination of the divine ratio of this scenical exhibition.—And the *Temple*, I should presume, is proposed rather than any other building, because of its having been the *Shechinah*, or ancient residence of the glory ; where the divine presence had been understood as more *special* in its manifestation. On the holiness of which place he is excited to have the greater regard, it being, of all others, the most convenient for an extensive display of the sacred character he sustained.—However specious this suggestion, it is thus rejected, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God* ; i. e. Thou shalt neither presumptuously put thy life in peril, for the sake of exciting popular admiration ; nor ostentatiously, to shew thy *singular* claim to divine protection.

It

It could not at all consist with the design of our Lord's mission, that he should *cast himself down* from a wing of the temple ; forasmuch as in his thus controuling the laws of nature, the people would no longer have considered him as a *man* ; but, as of a *superior* order of beings. So that it would weaken and confound, and not conciliate or confirm their faith in him, as the promised *Messiah*. Instead of leading the spectators to court a familiar converse and connexion, they would have looked upon him with consternation, and too much amazement !

The measure, moreover, must have tended to countenance *superstition*. For his enemies would have ascribed the wondrous atchievement, or strange preservation, to an occult virtue, wholly derived from their temple. We may therefore be abundantly assured, that miraculous power is not to operate for any vain or wanton purposes of enchanting *magical* appearances. Men must be able to discern, or infer, the meaning of such divine operations.

A *third* visionary scene, presented to the mind of Jesus, is what would excite the lustings of every passion, as it proposes a plentiful provision for every sensible, every animal indulgence.—Which is thus done, *viz.* “ From “ an exceeding high mountain he has a draught “ of all the empires of the world, with every “ appendage of riches, power, magnificence, “ elegance, and luxury.—He sees the homage “ paid

" paid to princes and potentates ! He explores
" their vast dominion ! At the same time, the
" power communicated to him, is shewn to
" be equal to an universal conquest ; and that
" if he will but fall down and do homage at
" the feet of AMBITION, his claim to univer-
" sal sovereignty shall be incontestible." Ver.
8, 9.

It is exceedingly strange, that any reader should once doubt of this scene being *visionary*, when, in the nature of the thing, it could not be otherwise : for such is the spherical figure of our globe, that it was impossible he should have a more extensive, natural perspective than the sensible horizon would afford. Allowing him to have been *a man, made like to his brethren*, his prospect could not have been more extensive. And, *on the contrary*, if we ascribe to him the essential faculties and powers of an infinite understanding, there was no need at all that he should be shewn these alluring scenes ; or that any being whatever should make him a tender of all earthly kingdoms, since there could not have been in the proposal any thing like the shadow of a temptation. Nay, had his nature been *superior* to the human, even one of the angelic, or celestial order ; it is not at all probable, that such an alluring offer should affect the desire, or endanger the depravity of a spirit, already honoured with a stated attendance on the presence of the glory.

But

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But whilst we consider him as *man*, we can trace the temptation ; and see how at present, as well as in prophetic vision, it did afterwards accost him, when the Jews do so eagerly solicit, that he would take the sceptre. This was an effort, really, and in fact, made upon him, which had only been before represented in vision ; and, in our calculation of its energy, we are persuaded that that divine communication of power, was what left the man Christ Jesus *free* in all his agencies and volitions : for he tells his disciples, “ that, if “ he chose to do it, *he could pray the father, and* “ *he would give him more than twelve legions of angels.*” How sure then must have been his universal conquests, with such a superiority to all human force !—His *freedom*, moreover, appears in each and every of the miracles which he wrought ; for in the application of that power, he invariably discovered a most exemplary benevolence.

N. B. If I am not mistaken, in the wilderness sceneries of allurement, the communicated power is not so properly in *aid* of our Lord's repelling and vanquishing temptation, as in giving vigour and energy to that address. We do not perhaps enter at all into the spirit of this narrative, if we leave out that singular degree of trial which it was to the man Christ Jesus, to preserve a dignity and decorum of behaviour, whilst wearing *the form of God!* or whilst distinguished from all mankind,

kind, by his having *the spirit without measure!*

How then did our Lord repel, so as to overcome, in this last scenery?—Thus:—In the divine directory, he saw this to be a first, capital precept, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*—Upon which we may suppose him reasoning in some such manner,—“ The unlimited power committed “ to me, and to be exercised by me, is not for “ the purpose of *seeking mine own glory*; but it “ is incumbent on me to *seek the glory of him* “ *that sent me*, in all the exertions of it. For “ verily, all beings whatsoever do constantly “ owe supreme homage to the one God: and “ it cannot consist with my character or mis- “ sion, to do any thing discordant with the “ first principle of all religion. And although “ I now plainly perceive, the idea, in the po- “ pular conception and expectation of the *Mes-
siah*, to be that of a temporal prince, who “ shall sway an universal sceptre! Yet, this is “ not conformable to the plan of my almighty “ father; nor does it at all correspond with the “ nature of that kingdom I am going to erect, “ *which is not of this world.*—The professed end “ therefore of all my ministrations must be, to “ take off the affections of mankind from earth- “ ly, and to raise them to heavenly things.”

This seems to be the spirit of the victory which our Lord gained over this allurement; and does provide us with an interpretation of
that

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that capital precept, which is full of divine
instruction.

Temptation not finding any thing to fasten upon in the breast of Jesus, the historian adds, *Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him*, Ver. 11. St. Luke has it, *When the devil had ended all his temptations, he departed from him for a season.* Accordingly we find, that the next remarkable scenery of trial, was when he began his humiliations, or when his sufferings were near approaching ; of which he said, *This is their hour, and the power of darkness*, i. e. the hour in which his enemies would be gratified. We read of no other urgent attacks during the time that he appeared in the form of God. For his wisdom and sagacity were manifestly an over-match for the craft and cunning of those who sought to ensnare him. And such was the presence of God with him, they could not lay a single hand upon him, till his hour was come. But when once the divine power was suspended or withdrawn, the gloomy, painful, and agonizing endurances took place. Which, we find, he sustained with a greatness of mind worthy the beloved son of God.

Thus I have understood the doctrinal instruction of these trying visionary scenes. Should it be asked, " How the disciples became acquainted with the above solitary address of temptation ? "

We

We might give a satisfactory solution, by saying, that after our Lord's resurrection, during his forty days converse with his disciples, *he spoke to them of the things which pertain to the kingdom of God,* Acts i. 3.—Doubtless he would not fail to explain and illustrate those grand events, which did most significantly relate to his own divine mission, and to its plenary evidence. Among others, the preparatory temptations in the wilderness could not be omitted.

Some observations that are useful may be made, from the above view now taken.

Obs. I. Our Lord's retreat from human society, was never intended to encourage the *monkish, ascetic, or hermetic life.* The end of his wilderness-retirement was of a very extraordinary nature, and peculiar to himself. It cannot therefore, with any reason, be interpreted as an example for the imitation of his disciples. His forty days fasting had a miraculous support; and it did demonstrate to him, that, in fact, he was the very *Messiah* prophesied of, who was to be the *light and life* of mankind. And yet, in the ignorant and dark ages of the church, among other gross superstitions, *Lent-fastings* were instituted, and so much merit too ascribed to those ridiculous observances, as to make them, in the eye of the vulgar, important and necessary. Herein men, called *Christians*, have exceeded the Jew himself.

self in their superstitions. For though his law-giver did fast forty days on the mount, we never read of that people once dreaming of such fasting as exemplary : for, as stupid as they ever were, they plainly saw it was no other than a supernatural support given to *Moses*, in proof of his divine mission. And, with respect to our Lord's retreat from human society for forty days, it was apparently in order to qualify him for the most beneficial public ministrations ; so that the *monk* and *hermit* have nothing which they can find in the wilderness-retreat, to countenance their unnatural and useless withdrawals from the social and civil life. Such nests of drones, have, of a truth, ever been *nuisances*, a reproach and disgrace to humanity !

Obs. II. The compass which is here given to temptation, is proportionate to those singular great abilities which were divinely communicated to our Lord. For they comprehend in them all the address that can possibly be made to the heart of man, from the earthly and sensible good ; and yet, they had no malignant effect on the spirit of this great prophet : for he so armed himself with truth, as to escape all its malignancy. No lustings were excited in him, with any effect : no wildness, wantonness, nor irregularity in his imagination : neither would he admit the allurement to fasten in the least upon him. This he would

would not do, though in the address there was every thing that could deprave the passion, or gratify the animal inclination in man. There was in it all the possible excitement that could arise from the world ; and which an apostle would call, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ; which is all that is of the world ; and is not of the father.*

Even that most artful veil or covering of lust, I mean the factitious, delusive mask of religion, which is properly denominated, SUPERSTITION, lay lurking within the scenery of trial ; inasmuch as our Lord is plausibly urged to presume on the *holiness of the place*, from whence he was to cast himself down, in order to engage the reverence, and feed the admiration of the people. How very instructive then is this scenery ? And how proportionate to his divine ability ? Not any thing ever has been, or yet is, found more prevalent among the superstitious, than to place a dependence upon consecrated persons, garments, buildings, elements, and utensils. What efficacious operation is ascribed to indelible character ! and to consecrated inclosures ! — *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we,* — But in this scenery, all ostentatious, unreasonable, and inflamed devotions, that would disregard the established laws of nature, are expressly condemned. Every motive and measure that is calculated to seize violently on the passions of the vulgar, are shown to be unjustifiable,

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tifiable.—*Seeking honour one of another*, under the guise of religion, would suit the character of an insolent *proud Pharisee* infinitely better than that of the humble, modest Christian.—In a word, it is internal piety, the practical, regular effects of devotion, the establishing divine moral, which alone can render the mind of man an overmatch for temptation. For verily, *superstition* is no security from, but it is a pregnant source of evil. Whereas *religion* is a rational, spiritual, heavenly profession, which will not countenance any thing in us that is cynical, unsocial, or immoral.

Religion is what will not suffer us to take one measure that presumes even on miracle for our safety.—The *sons of piety* indeed know, that the *angels of God do encamp about them that fear him*; and that they are commissioned to do many kind offices for them: but then, this is only whilst they are found in the way of their duty; i. e. in a virtuous use and application of all their faculties, powers, and abilities.—Not when they allow the imagination to wax vain and wanton; not when they suffer their passions to become foolish and extravagant.—Since therefore the plan of religion is so very plain, that he who runs may read, we are not to expect a licence to sport ourselves with miracle. Nay, verily, that divine testimony, at first given to the gospel-system, or rather, to the publishers of it, will not, in after-ages, admit of any repetition: of which we may

may be assured, from the heavenly instruction being so perfectly clear and full, as to comprehend in it every possible circumstance of allurement from these sensitive scenes ; and also every method of repelling and overcoming their most urgent impressions.

Obs. III. The history of our Lord's temptation, serves to prove his proper humanity. The varied address supposes a being of similar passions with our own ; and the manner in which he repelled the allurement, is, to us, the most instructive and exemplary. Hence it is, that the apostle, when writing to the Hebrew Christians in *Palestine*, says, *In all things it behoved him to be made like to his brethren.* And again, *that he was in all points tempted as we.* And when writing to the *Galatians*, he says, *that Christ was MADE of a woman, made under the law.* These things could not have been affirmed of him, nor could he, in fact, have been of the *seed of Abraham, and family of David,* had he not been specifically, really, and truly man.—His being formed by the immediate power of God; and born of a virgin, can no more be a negative upon his proper humanity, than the creation of the first man and woman was upon theirs.—Nay, so far from being a reason of objection, it seemed necessary that he should be thus distinguished in his mother's conception of him, who had been thus expressly described in prophecy,

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phesy, and who was at that time the *desire of all nations!*

On the contrary, could we appropriate to him the nature or essence of God, it would be impossible that he should either be man, or that God should be said *to be with him*; unless we may be allowed to cherish absurdities. Besides, deity can neither be tempted, nor be liable to delusion. But if, as some have affected to say, *he was God and man, in two distinct natures and one person, for ever*; he must then have been incapable either of temptation or of suffering; because the personal union would absolutely forbid the impression. Moreover, there does not appear any compound idea more unnatural and confounding to the human mind, than that of *creator and creature constituting one person*. The preposterous image or idea, has never been exceeded by the grossest pagan idolatry!

For example, we may thus reason upon his painful endurances,—What is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, must be a pure, uncompounded spirit, without parts or passions. And, as a venerable pen has observed, “ The divine “ nature is compassionate; but not for this “ reason, because tempted or grieved with misery.—No: it was only the *man Christ Jesus* “ suffered; and consequently feels a sympathy “ from hence with his distressed servants.—“ And it is most certain, that if he sympathizes “ with

“ with them in their troubles, he must then
“ know them in that nature which only has a
“ fellow-feeling of them : for none can sym-
“ pathize with the miseries of others, which
“ he knows not of. So that they who deny
“ Christ’s humanity in the knowledge of our
“ miseries, do, in effect, deny him to be that
“ compassionate advocate which the scriptures
“ represent him (*i*)”—Nay more, he says, that
to attribute deity to Christ, would be to teach
a man to say his creed backward,—“ Since
“ the *apostles creed* takes notice of nothing to be
“ believed concerning Christ, but what belongs
“ to his manhood, (which is strange, if there
“ were any articles relating to his deity, which
“ must be most important) one may venture
“ to deny them all, with this secret unexpress-
“ ed reserve, *viz.* meaning it of the divine
“ nature to which they belong not (*k*).”

These observations must be allowed to be made with great judgment ; and they conclude, that Jesus Christ could be truly, properly, or specifically no other than *a man*. Any different idea could not be conceived from *prophecy* ; nor from *gospel-history* ; nor from the reports made of him in the *epistles*, by apostles. No one apprehension can we form, from nature or reason, of the deity, but that of a pure,

(*i*) *Emlyn’s Tracts*, Vol. III p. 115.

(*k*) *Ibidem*, p. 103.

uncompounded, infinite spirit, incapable of any mechanical impression from the created system; for as those perfections we ascribe to him are absolute, he must be immutable and impassible. What then can be more absurd than to suppose the almighty creator and supporter of the universe, in a state of infancy, infirmity, or weakness, or under any painful endurance? A prophet of ancient times would teach us much better, when he says, *Hast thou not heard, the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary!* If. xl. 28.

Take we the judgment of one or two early Christian writers.—*Justin Martyr*, in his Dialogue with *Tryphon*, says, “ Nobody, unless he
“ be out of his wits, will dare to advance, that
“ the *father* and author of all things did quit
“ the heavens, to cause himself to be seen in
“ a small part of the earth.”

Tertullian against *Praxeas*, says, “ That
“ he would not believe that the sovereign God
“ descended into the womb of a woman,
“ though even the scripture itself should say
“ it; he being persuaded, by reason and phi-
“ losophy, that the supreme God is immense,
“ immutable, and invisible (i).”

If therefore, under any satanic delusion, we should ascribe proper deity to the person of the man Christ Jesus, whom we are assured was the subject of trial, and who felt the painful sense of hunger, thirst, and weariness; it would be the very same thing as to ascribe to God weakness,

(i) See *Platonism unveiled*, P. 1. Chap. I.

weakness, infirmity, and mutability ! a most unworthy and dishonourable conception of that adorable being, *who knows no variation, nor the shadow of change ; and who is from everlasting to everlasting God.*—But would we think religiously of him, we must think rationally ; which will not suffer us to admit the monstrous idea, of *creator* and *creature* constituting one person. All contradictions may as well be reconciled, as such an heterogeneous personal union be once made consistent with nature, truth, and reason.

However, there are not a few who fancy to speak of *his generation as eternal and ineffable* ; only because the prophet has asked, *Who shall declare his generation (k) ?* When it is evident, he is only painting the wickedness of his people, and intimating their impious, unexampled behaviour towards him, as past, or above all description.—We all know what *his generation* was, when we apply the terms to his formation by the immediate power of God, in the womb of his mother ; but the iniquity and ingratitude of his people or country towards him, is beyond all conception !

IV. We can very rationally account for the immaculate purity and innocence of *Jesus*, which he preserved inviolate under the temptation, from the proper use he made of all his powers, in religiously attending to the divine illumination. He made a just survey of the whole scenery,

(k) If. liii. 8.

scenery, he formed a distinct idea of the amiableness of truth, and the deformity of falsehood. He committed no mistake or error in the judgment he made of the design of his divine vouchsafements, or of the nature of his heavenly appointments.—The scheme of providence opens before him, and he explores the whole system of moral obligation. And by the varied visionary address, he is furnished with ability of pointing out to mankind the infinitude of delusion and danger! We can thus account for his spotless character, *who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* The singularity of his character should not raise in us any difficulty of conception, or of credit; since even his harbinger is spotless and irreproachable in his morals, and was held in universal reverence and admiration! Our Lord himself says of him, *he was a burning and a shining light.*—But the blessed Jesus did not, as John did, receive *the spirit by measure.*

All the while, we are not to consider the divine communication as of the specific nature, or personal essence of Christ, for it was what left him a man; and did neither destroy the freedom of his attentions, nor the liberty of his volitions.—*Not my will, but thine be done.*—*I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* Thus continuing a moral agent, in the whole of his behaviour, he became an amiable and most illustrious pattern of universal

versal imitation. How instructive, how attractive that piety, that virtue, that unyeilding devotedness, which gave no way under the urgent possible trial, from the most specious and alluring appearances of sensible good !

V. The ample proof we have of the eastern manner of *personalizing* temptation, should remove all unreasonable prejudice, which has arisen from the doctrine of a figurative *devil*, found in the gospel-history. Not any thing can be more plain, than that the language of the scriptures is accommodate to vulgar conception, and current philosophy. The imagery and figure is usually taken from popular idioms, and we are taught to judge of things spiritual and heavenly, by things corporeal and earthly. So it is that God is said to have *eyes*, *ears*, *hands*, *arms*, *feet*, *back-parts*, as well as *face* (1). Nay, the very energy and produce of his power is represented as a work of *labour*; and consequently, we find *rest* ascribed to him, upon a finishing of any of his works.

More than this, the proceedings of his providence are delineated to express various passions of esteem and contempt, love and hatred, delight and indignation. They are likewise made to express the munificence of his goodness, or else the fury of his resentment. And yet, the rational attentive mind most plainly perceives, that the figurative image condescends to vulgar conception, and to the ge-

nius

(1) Consult *Platonism unveiled*, P. 1. Chap. IV.

nious and necessity of universal language ; for strictly and properly speaking, the infinite spirit can neither have form nor figure, parts nor passions.

None should take offence at the personalizing figure. So far from it, the sublimity and spirit which it gives to language, is a manifest cogent reason of delight and pleasure. What, for instance, can strike one more than that bold figure, used by St. Paul, to describe an epidemical lust, when he calls it, *The GOD of this world, that has blinded the minds of men !* 2 Cor. iv. 4. *viz.* a first desire of the perishing good.— And when he would paint that wanton imagination which gave the infectious spread to idolatry, he stiles this fiend, *the PRINCE of the power of the air, that works in the hearts of the children of disobedience,* Eph. ii. 2. How much authority is there given to the figure, when we meet with it dropping from the lips of the most distinguished divine instructor of mankind, who speaks of the subtle, and of the envious, and mischievous, by denominating them *foxes, serpents, vipers, and children of the devil?*—There is not then any thing, in the figurative stile of the New Testament writings, that will admit of ridicule ; or in the least countenance the sneer of the unbeliever. No ; not when the historian says, that Jesus was led by the spirit of God into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. The measure we have found capable not only of defence, but also expressive
of

of the wisdom and goodness, or the holiness of God, and as affording the greatest instruction to mankind.

Obs. VI. The history of the temptations in the wilderness, when rationally understood, is in proof of the divine mission of our Lord. They were intended to qualify him for his public ministry, as they gave him a prophetic view of what would be the compass of his trial from the sensitive allurement.—It does not appear, that during the *forty* days of his fasting, any one part of the scenery which we have considered did at all open before him. We are then to suppose him, during all that time, as under the teachings of the ORACLES;—informed in the nature and design of his office; shewn the whole plan of the divine purposes of grace and mercy to mankind; and having every assurance given him of his being that very *Messiah*, promised to the world before *Abraham* himself had any existence. Every requisite opening would be made to him, of the testimony which should be given to his mission, and of the opposition he was to meet with from the world; and doubtless, he was wholly instructed too in the scenery of his painful endurances. The plan of providence he must clearly understand, in order to his exerting those divine abilities in conformity to its constitution. And the superior honours which should be conferred on him, in reward of a perfect obedience

obedience and submission to the plan of his operations and sufferings, did require such a revelation of the deity, as would not have been made to any other man: which occasioned the evangelist to say, *That no man had seen God any time, but the only begotten son in the bosom of the father, he hath declared.* And our Lord further says, *That no man knoweth the father, but the son, and he to whom the son shall reveal him.* These revelations made to him of the father, in these forty days interview he has with him in the wilderness, would evince to Jesus himself the divinity of his mission, as it qualified him for his ministrations. And it is not reasonable to suppose, that the man Christ Jesus would have been otherwise furnished for executing his heavenly commission, and giving full proof to the world of his superior appointments, as the resurrection and the life, and the final judge. And with regard to the enchanting scenery, which is here described with so much address, as to comprehend in it the utmost compass of alluring temptation, we may challenge the *rejector* of revelation to shew us, in any known system of instruction, from the best moralists or greatest philosophers, any thing equal to its illumination. What celebrated teacher of mankind did ever propose so rational and efficacious a measure of repelling and subduing temptation? Pray, where or when did ever an human genius exist, capable of inventing a moral fable or fiction so full of expression, and with such regular features

tures of a finished divine character ? Or where did mankind ever fix an eye upon an human being, to which such a narration of visionary scenes could have been applicable, besides that amiable, distinguished man, whom we call, *the Christ, or Messiah* ; and to whom God gave of his spirit *not by measure* ?

So far are we then from reckoning this narrative, any sort of objection to the credibility of the gospel-history, that we hold it to be full of convincing evidence of its divinity. And upon the whole, we cannot wonder, that this heavenly instructor should say, *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, viz. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day,* John xii. 48.

I chuse to finish the discourse with a Christian doxology.—“ Now to the one God the “ father, be supreme homage ! and to the man “ Christ Jesus, whom he has constituted the “ one Lord, be all due reverence, love, and obe- “ dience. AMEN.”

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